DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 973 HE 023 130

AUTHOR Preskill, Hallie
TITLE Adult Learning and the Teaching of Evaluation: A Study of an Experiential Learning Project.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Evaluation Association (San Francisco, CA, October 19-21, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Learning; *Course Content; *Course Organization; *Evaluation Methods; Evaluation Utilization; *Experiential Learning; *Graduate Study; Higher Education; School Business Relationship
IDENTIFIERS College of Saint Thomas MN

ABSTRACT

The paper describes the development of a course on evaluation in business and industry, offered as part of a Master's program in Human Resource Development. Since the average age of the students was 36, special emphasis was placed on structuring the class to increase relevance to the students' working lives and to ways adults learn best. A brief literature review examined theories of adult learning and motivation and of experiential learning and teaching evaluation. This review resulted in identification of six principles of effective practice which guided course design. Central to the course's activities was a real-life evaluation study of a local insurance company's training programs. Implementation required negotiations with the company and university personnel, group design of the evaluation study, document analysis, development of employee and customer surveys as well as interview questions for individuals and focus groups, and preparation of a final report. Finally, the course was evaluated against the six principles identified as facilitating adult learning: (1) voluntary participation in learning; (2) mutual respect; (3) collaborative spirit; (4) action and reflection; (5) critical reflection; and (6) self-direction. All students recommended using the real-life evaluation project again. An appendix presents the evaluation design matrix. 18 references. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED314973

ADULT LEARNING AND THE TEACHING OF EVALUATION:

A STUDY OF AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROJECT

By

Hallie Preskill, Ph.D.
College of St. Thomas
St. Paul, MN

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Hallie Preskill

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Evaluation Association, San Francisco, CA, 1989.

HE 023 130

Introduction

> Considering that the education of adults has been a concern of the human race for a very long time, it is curious that there has been so little thinking, investigating, and writing about adult learning until recently. The adult learner has been a neglected species. (Knowles, 1984, p. 27)

The above quotation became the premise for a book by Malcolm Knowles which began the renewed interest in the process of how adults learn and are taught over the last two decades. Even more recently, however, another author has echoed the same concern:

> The facilitation of learning - assisting adults to make sense of and act upon the personal, social, occupational, and political environment in which they live - is an important, exhilarating, and profound activity, both for facilitators and for learners. It is also a highly complex psychosocial drama in which the personalities involved, the contextual setting for the educational transaction, and the prevailing political climate crucially affect the nature and form of learning. Yet among theorists and practitioners of adult learning this complexity is frequently ignored. (Brookfield, 1986, p. vii)

The inspiration to write this paper came from my involvement in teaching courses on research and evaluation, instructional design, and training and development, to graduate students who have an average age of 36. The program in which I teach is geared for individuals who teach/train adults in business, education, and other non-profit settings. The program requires students to take classes on adult learning and adult developmental psychology which form the foundation of the remaining courses in the program. In teaching my evaluation course for the past four years, I have been continually pressed by my students to make the content more relevant and concrete. In that my evaluation training done at the University of Illinois with Bob Stake, Ernie House, Jim Raths and others, has significantly helped me understand and value the theoretical underpinnings of evaluation, my students have been looking for knowledge and skills they can immediately apply back in their workplace. While still firmly believing students must understand the various theories about evaluation design and implementation, the need to make the course more "practical" became a challenge which I took on this year.

Defining Adult Learning

The notion of making knowledge and skills practical and relevant to adults is deeply rooted in the adult learning literature which has experienced a rebirth of interest in the past twenty years. To clarify what the term "adult" means, Knowles (1980) has offered the following two criteria:

1. A person is an adult to the extent that the individual is performing social roles typically assigned by our culture to those it considers adults.

2. A person is an adult to the extent that the individual perceives him or herself to be essentially responsible for his or her life.

Based on the work of Eduard C. Lindeman (1926), who was strongly influenced by the work of John Dewey, and, according to Knowles (1984), "laid the foundation for a systematic theory about adult learning", he offers five key assumptions that constitute the foundation of modern adult learning theory:

1. Adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy.
2. Adults' orientation to learning is life-centered.
3. Experience is the richest source for adults' learning.
4. Adults have a deep need to be self-directing.
5. Individual differences among people increase with age.

The implications of these key assumptions are that learning should be based on peoples' experiences, should be focused on life situations, that instruction should emphasize analyzing experiences, that the role of the teacher is that of an "engager" rather than a "transmitter", and that teaching strategies should take into account students' differences in style, time, place and pace (Knowles, 1984, p. 31). While Knowles has discussed the differences between pedagogy and andragogy[1] at some length, and has been criticized for making them sound antithetical, let it suffice to say that Knowles (1979) believes that "some pedagogical assumptions are realistic for adults and some andragogical assumptions are realistic for children in some situations" (p. 53).

---

[1] Andragogy may be defined as the "art and science of helping adults learn". (Knowles, 1980, p. 43).

Adults' Motivation To Learn

Adults participate in learning for a variety of reasons. Wlodkowski (1984) has written that typically adults want "to be better, quicker, and more creative in what they value". McLagan (1978) has developed a list of items that she believes adults want to gain to some degree:

Health	Security	Advancement
Time	Praise	(vocational or social)
Money	Comfort	Enjoyment
Popularity	Leisure	Self-confidence
Improved	Competence	Personal prestige
appearance	Efficiency	

Research has also shown, however, that most adults seek out learning experiences because of different life-changing events (marriage, divorce, new job, promotion, being fired, etc.). Zemke & Zemke (1981) suggest that these events are largely produced by the work environment and for that reason, learning experiences should be related to their work. For most adults in this situation, learning then, "is a means to an end, not an end in itself" (p. 58). Given this motivation to learn, Cross (1984) has found that older and more mature learners are more likely to select an educational program that is less traditional. Furthermore, Cross' research suggests that, "the more successful and established the individual is *as an adult*, the less satisfactory traditional college programs are going to be" (p. 77).

Understanding that adults prefer and seek out learning experiences that are motivated by professional needs, choose educational settings that offer non-traditional approaches to learning, and come with a life history of rich experiences on which they will build new understandings, instructors are presented with a challenge to find new or innovative ways that will capitalize on and stimulate adults' learning.

Experiential Learning and Teaching Evaluation

"If education is life, then life is also education."
(Lindeman, 1926, p. 9)

Several authors have written about the use of a practicum or field experience for students of evaluation (Moxley & Visingardi. 1989; Morris, 1987, 1989; Brown, 1985, Weeks, 1982)

Morris (1989) reports having had a great deal of success with students engaged in an evaluation course with field experiences. His post-course evaluations have asked students to rate how much they feel they have learned from doing the evaluation project. On a five-point scale (5= a

great deal), students have "responded with an average rating of 4.6". In discussing the value with students at the end of the course, he says students typically comment "that they 'couldn't imagine' the course being offered without the fieldwork component" (1987, p. 8). Moxley & Visingardi (1989) add, "The program evaluation practicum is a useful vehicle for encouraging students to learn the pragmatic, interpersonal, and technical dimensions of evaluation" (Moxley & Visingardi, 1989, p. 57). Through the use of real-life experiences students become in Donald Schon's terms, "reflective practitioners" (1983). That is, the student may reflect

> In and on his practice...he may reflect on the tacit norms and appreciations which underlie a judgment, or on the strategies and theories implicit in a pattern of behavior. He may reflect on the feeling for a situation which has led him to adopt a particular course of action, on the way in which he has framed the problem he is trying to solve, or on the role he has constructed for himself within a larger institutional context" (p. 62).

By having students involved in an evaluation project where they are responsible for its design and implementation, students are empowered to reflect on their action in the way Schon describes. Brookfield (1987) adds, "it is through such experience..that individuals construct the meanings and value frameworks that in turn determine how they code new stimuli and information" (p. 29).

Wlodkowski (1986) has written that an instructor should build in certain motivational strategies in the learning activity. He suggests that the design involve strategies for increasing students' *attention, interest* and *involvement:*

1) *Attention.* "The learner becomes more alert and investigates what is occurring in the learning activity."

2) *Interest.* "The learner consciously desires more information and is emotionally willing to participate in the learning activity." Here the learner is listening, watching, feeling, reading, and note-taking.

3) *Involvement.* "The learner is actively engaged in the learning activity. He/she is "searching, evaluating, constructing, creating, and organizing the learning material into new or better ideas, memories, skills, understandings, solutions, or decisions".

Brookfield (1987, p. 9-10) offers a set of principles that are particularly useful in developing a course based on what is known about adult learning. The six principles of effective practice in facilitating learning are:

1. Participation in learning is voluntary; adults engage in learning as a result of their own volition.

2. Effective practice is characterized by a respect among participants for each other's self-worth.

3. Facilitation is collaborative. Facilitators and learners are engaged in a cooperative enterprise in which, at different times and for different purposes, leadership and facilitation roles will be assumed by different group members.

4. Praxis is placed at the heart of effective facilitation. Learners and facilitators are involved in a continual process of activity, reflection upon activity, further reflection and collaborative analysis, and so on.

5. Facilitation aims to foster in adults a spirit of critical reflection. Through educational encounters, learners come to appreciate that values, beliefs, behaviors, and ideologies are culturally transmitted and that they are provisional and relative.

6. The aim of facilitation is the nurturing of self-directed, empowered adults.

These six principles were those that guided the development and implementation of my course on evaluation in business and industry this past Spring. Additional discussion of these will be offered later in this paper.

ED 514 - Evaluation in Business & Industry - A Case Report

Background Information

The class was taught one night a week for fifteen weeks, for 2 1/2 hours. There were 16 students who were nearing the completion of their 39 semester credit Master's program in Human Resource Development.

Prior to the first class I contacted a training and development colleague of mine who was working for a mid-size insurance company. I asked her if her company had any evaluation needs for which they would be seeking outside assistance. It turned out that the company had recently made some budget cuts and the evaluation she was hoping to do of the company's training programs and their effect on providing quality customer service was now an impossibility. She was concerned however, because she had included the evaluation as one of her year-end goals. When I suggested we meet and talk about my class conducting the evaluation, she jumped at the chance

Negotiations

About three weeks before the class was officially to begin, Deb (my colleague), her boss (Bob, Director of Human Resource Development), and I met to discuss their needs. Bob was very interested in our doing an evaluation study of the training programs and customer service, but was particularly concerned about the confidentiality of information since 16 "students" he had never seen would be handling some potentially sensitive client and employee information.

Bob suggested that the students develop a charter of confidentiality - essentially a statement that would serve as an oath of secrecy about what they learned about the company. This seemed like a reasonable request and I agreed to it.

After this meeting Bob obtained the President's verbal authorization of the project. When we met for the second time, one week before the start of class, Bob and Deb were quite excited about the evaluation study. We discussed the rationale, purpose and some key evaluation questions as a means of focusing the evaluation study. I decided to have as much of this information as possible before class so that the students would have a good idea of the parameters of the project. I invited Deb and Bob to come to the second class meeting to answer students' questions and to assist us in developing the evaluation plan.

The Design Phase

The class appeared very interested in participating in a real evaluation study. Most of them weren't sure what it was all about, but seemed very willing to continue on this path. They had an infinite number of questions which they wrote down in preparation for their interview with Deb and Bob. We discussed how to identify the needs of a client, how to focus an evaluation study, and the type of relationship we wanted to develop with the client. I suggested we use a model akin to Patton's (1982) collaborative approach since the evaluation was to be formative.

The two-hour interview with Deb and Bob was impressive. It was impressive because the students asked many insightful, probing questions ranging from why the evaluation was necessary to asking what political implications or constraints could possibly impede the evaluation. A great deal of information was gained. At the end of this class, the students were hooked. They were clearly excited and each one expressed an interest in seeing it through to the end. A few days later Bob and Deb both said they felt a bit relieved because they could see how professional and committed these students were. They now saw them as professional adults rather than as "students".

Deb and I decided to meet weekly so that I could share the progress of the study and so that Deb could answer any questions that arose in class. By the third class we were developing a design matrix. The purpose still seemed a bit fuzzy since we originally thought the study was to evaluate how well the training programs were in preparing employees to provide "excellent" customer service. But we started to learn that Bob really wanted the evaluation to cover customer service in a much broader context. He appeared to have another agenda which was not particularly clear to us, though I believe he felt the company was not doing what it could to provide excellent customer service and saw this as an effective means for raising the issue. This perception led us into a discussion about the value-laden nature of evaluation and the politics and uses of evaluation. While this topic was on the syllabus to be discussed much later in the course, the appropriate "teachable moment" had arrived, and I seized it.

From here we developed a rationale, purpose statement, list of key audiences, and guiding evaluation questions. When this was presented to Deb, she was very pleased with how the class was approaching the study. She shared with me, which I later shared with the class, a memo from the President which stated that the company had lost significant amounts of money in the last three quarters, and as a result, was making some additional budget cuts. On this day in my journal I wrote, "Now I know the real purpose for this evaluation, and why Bob is so concerned. Though neither his nor Deb's position is in jeopardy, the company needs to regain its quality status and Bob wants to be part of this movement".

During the fourth class we talked about different approaches to conducting the evaluation, now that we had determined the key evaluation questions. The group decided that we were doing a responsive evaluation and would use a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures. We then developed a data collection matrix of evaluation questions and methodology (see Appendix A). It was decided that to address the nine evaluation questions, the following methods would be used:

- employee focus group interviews (3)
- manager focus group interviews (2)
- customer phone interviews (N=70)
- former customer phone interviews (N=25)
- non-policy claimant phone interviews (N= 20)
- individual manager interviews (N=9)
- regional and district sales manager phone interviews (N= 25)
- employee survey (N= 122)
- current customer survey (N= 588)
- document analysis

It should be noted here that we were prevented from contacting and involving the insurance agents. At the beginning of our negotiations, Bob told me that we were not to survey or talk with the field agents. He explained that this group had been surveyed the summer before and would not be receptive to participating in this study. He indicated that the politics of the organization would not support gathering data from this group. This fact not only troubled me, but more interestingly, it deeply bothered the students. If this study was about customer service, they said, how could they not involve the agents who are the first line providers of customer service. We brought this up several times to Bob, but he stood firm. We discussed this issue in class and concluded that we would clearly state this as an evaluation constraint in our final report that limits the findings of the study.

Class #5 involved a discussion about sampling, reliability and validity. The students appeared to really understand these topics because they could immediately relate their meaning to a concrete example in which they were becoming closely involved. We decided that the work would be divided up among all the students. Since almost all of the students were employed full-time, I asked if anyone would be able to conduct the focus groups (we agreed that each group would have two facilitators). To my surprise, twelve of the sixteen said they very much wanted to be part of this activity. For several, this meant taking vacation or sick days from work. This was a clear sign to me that they were invested.

Another example of student interest and commitment occurred when one student suggested that we find out more about customer service and volunteered to bring in a series of videotapes on this topic. I told the class that they could view these tapes one-hour prior to class if they were interested. For five weeks, 6 or 7 people came early to view these tapes. These particular tapes were useful in identifying some of the issues company's must pay attention to in order to provide quality customer

service. After the fifth class, I wrote in my journal, "they are really in this together - it feels so right."

Implementation

Before the next class, two of the students and I met with some of the key managers, both to get information and to solicit their support. The students were surprised at how helpful and informative these people were. During the next class, we discussed this observation, and talked about peoples' perceptions of evaluation and the role of the evaluator.

The topic for class #6 was document analysis. We had a pile of documents from the company; everything from the annual report, to recent market research surveys, to telephone audit reports. After a lecture on document and record analysis, the students were able to apply what they learned and analyzed the documents we had collected.

Following the document analysis we talked about survey design. Following this lecture/discussion, I divided the students into work groups of four and they started developing questions and response formats for the customer survey. For the employee survey, I asked everyone to bring to class next time three questions to be considered. After each group came up with a set of questions (keyed to the guiding evaluation questions), they exchanged these with another group who reviewed and critiqued the questions. After this class I took the questions for the customer survey and constructed a draft of the survey.

Even though I teach students always to expect the unexpected, and to even plan for this, this project was thrown a curve on class #7. We had a terrific snowstorm that shut the Twin Cities down for 24 hours. We had counted on this class period to develop the employee survey and to begin developing the phone interview guides. I wrote in my journal,

> "How frustrating - so much to do and even less time to do it in. Already we're behind and class #8 is coming up. One thing I've learned already is that this project, while exciting as a learning experience, is far more complex than I expected it to be. It is turning out to be a lot of work for students and me. The balance between teaching and student involvement is so hard to attain."

During class #8 we spent time debriefing the findings of the document analysis and decided that several pieces of information would be useful in developing the instruments. We then worked in small groups developing the survey and interview instruments. Having them develop these tools after listening to a lecture on instrument construction was very

useful. They could apply this information immediateiy and receive feedback on how well they understood it.

During the small group work I met with each person individually and asked which of the data collection tasks they were most interested in working on. Silently worried that I would end up doing most of the work, I again was amazed how willing everyone was to do several activities.

Deb had agreed to do all of the scheduling for the individual and focus group interviews. This made our task substantially easier. I gave her dates when the students were available and she worked with the company's employees in confirming these dates. Deb also agreed to provide mailing labels and envelopes for all of the customer surveys. We would provide the return address envelopes so that they surveys could be returned to the College.[2] Deb and Bob also said that they had sent out memos to the departments that would be involved in the evaluation, explaining the purpose and intent of the study.

For class #9, we spent the majority of time finalizing drafts of the employee and customer surveys and wrote cover letters for each. The following day I delivered them to Bob and Deb. They reviewed them, made some suggestions which I incorporated, and I returned the master copy to Deb to have typeset, reproduced and mailed.

The topic of class #10 was focus group and individual interviewing. After a lecture on each of these the students developed the interview guides and engaged in a series of mock interviews. We discussed various aspects of interviewing and role-played some possible responses. The students were excited about the focus groups which were scheduled for the following week. Nine students would be facilitating the focus groups and we agreed that I would sit in on each of them for a about 45 minutes. We also agreed that we would meet at the end of their particular sessions and debrief their experience.[3]

The focus groups went like clock-work. The students all arrived at least 30 minutes early, and were well-versed with their questions. They were more than ready when the participants started arriving. I observed each of the students and later provided them with written and verbal feedback. The participants in the focus groups cooperated very well. Some

---

[2] We chose this method for two reasons: 1) to provide confidentiality to the respondents, and 2) to decrease the amount of instrument handling.

[3] One of the course assignments was a thought paper that was to be a personal reflection about their role in the evaluation study. It was to include what they did, how they felt about it, what they wished they had known before, and what they would do differently next time.

knew about the study, others did not. The focus groups revealed a situation for which we weren't quite prepared, however. We learned that employee morale was quite low; that the climate of the organization was seriously troubled. The employees knew that the company was having financial problems, and many said they didn't know if they had a future with the company. Many looked anxious and spoke angrily. Some said they knew of many who were looking for other jobs. In spite of feeling a certain loyalty to the company, several explained that recently, their service to the customer might have been less than excellent since they have been so concerned about losing their jobs. Considering this turn of events, and the climate it developed in the focus groups, I believe that the students did remarkably well. Their thought papers were insightful and were proof that the experience was full of learning.

Class #11, being the day of the focus groups gave us much to talk about. The focus group facilitators shared their experiences with the rest of the class.

A few days later I was scheduled to interview the President and Vice-President of the company. When I met with Bob briefly before these interviews, I sensed that Bob was upset or nervous about something he would not share. Bob wanted me to promise that I would not share any of the preliminary results with the President. I agreed, saying that that would be my policy in any case. Upon returning to Bob's office after these interviews, I found Bob visibly upset, Deb looking shaken, and one of her colleagues crying. What I learned was that while I was away interviewing, Deb and one of her co-workers had been told they were being laid off because of severe problems the company was having, both financially and with their credit rating. Others in the company were also being let go too. Rumors about merger, sell-out, and bankruptcy were abounding. The future of the company was unclear.

In spite of all this, Bob said he wanted to continue with the evaluation. He said, "it will be especially interesting now". Due to delays in duplicating the survey and sign-offs on the cover letters, the customer and employee surveys were going out the next day. We had only four more class sessions.

Class #12. When I told the class about what had happened with Deb, they were shocked and quite upset. They asked questions about what does this mean for the evaluation? One person even said, "can we change the focus of our evaluation and study the company's culture and climate instead?" The students agreed that they had become involved in a very interesting project, one that definitely reflected "real life". For the rest of the class period we spent time talking about content analysis.

I gave the students transcripts for each of the focus groups (they had been audio-taped). They worked in groups using what they had learned about content analysis coding the data. After they spent time on this activity, we discussed the issues that arose in analyzing the data and the decision rules that guided each group's analysis.

A lecture on quantitative data analysis was the topic of class #13. We looked at the surveys, noted the level of data it would gather, and discussed appropriate analysis techniques. With the surveys that had been returned, the class learned about cleaning surveys and proceeded to code them for computer entry.

The topics for class #14 were the evaluation standards and utilization. After a mini-lecture on the standards we talked about how our evaluation conduct met the standards and what we might have done differently. After my lecture on evaluation utilization, I asked the class to think about the factors they thought might influence this evaluation's use and the factors that might influence evaluation use in their organizations.

It was the last class (#15), and we hadn't even received the print-outs from the computing center with the results of the employee and customer surveys. We had individual interviews that had been transcribed from audio-tape, but had not had time to analyze them. Some students approached me and said that they really wanted to learn how to do the remaining steps of the analysis and suggested we somehow get together to work on this. With a sense of relief, I set a date, reserved a room, and told the class that if they wanted to come, and could come, we would analyze as much of the data as possible in one afternoon. It wouldn't all get done, but it would provide them with more concrete practice on how to analyze both survey and interview data. Five people were able to come this day. We did not do everything, but accomplished a great deal. The semester had been over for two weeks, and I was left with the task of analyzing the remaining data and writing the report. I was disappointed that I wasn't able to give students practice doing this, since I believe it is so obviously critical to any evaluation study. Also, the report was due in two weeks.

The Report

I called Bob and told him that the project was a little behind schedule but that the report would be forthcoming. He reiterated his interest, said morale was terrible, and said he wasn't sure how long he was going to be around. About two weeks later, Bob called and again asked how I was doing on the report. I told him it was coming along and I would have it to him in two more weeks. He surprised me when he said, that the evaluation study had recently taken on new meaning with some. He explained that the Vice-President (to whom Bob reports) wants to "use it as

a scimitar" to wave over his head. In further discussions I was led to believe that Bob possibly saw the evaluation as his legacy, a kind of "I told you so, now see for yourself" kind of symbol. I only wished my students were around so we could have discussed this new development.

I finally delivered one copy of the report to Bob and asked him to review it. A few days later he called and said he liked it and had just a couple of questions. We discussed these and I made some minor adjustments. I then provided him with the seven copies he had requested. He gave three to his boss, who then gave one to the President (who had recently resigned, or had been forced out, but was staying on until a successor could be named), and one to the ex-President who had been called on to help the company get through its crisis. I told Bob that I would be available to make any verbal presentations requested about the study. After several weeks, I called Bob, and asked him what was new, and if anyone had read and responded to the evaluation report. He said, that the company was standing still, "people are treading water". For one reason or another, the Vice-President and Presidents are "sitting on it" and he wasn't sure why. He explained that he had recently been working on his budget for next year, and had requested significantly more money in some areas. He said he was justifying these projected expenses based on the evaluation results. He thinks that when the Finance department sees his requests and his references to the evaluation study, it will prompt management to ask questions about the evaluation, which Bob hopes will be the start of discussions around the findings of the study.

Did the Course Meet Brookfield's (1987) Six Principles?

As one method of evaluating this approach to teaching, I will discuss how well my evaluation course achieved each of Brookfield's six principles of effective practice.

1. **Participation in learning is voluntary.**

Brookfield suggests that once learners have expressed a desire to learn, and have enrolled in some type of educational experience, the facilitator/instructor will not have to spend a great deal of time trying to coerce students to engage in learning activities. He explains, "Adult's willingness to learn also means that they are less likely to resist participatory learning techniques such as discussion, role playing games, small-group work, and collaborative analysis of personal experiences" (p. 11). At the same time, learners may withdraw from any activity which does not meet their specific needs or does not make particular sense to them.

The project in which my class was involved allowed them to participate in varying degrees according to their needs and interests. While they were required to write three thought papers and complete the development of a final project (an evaluation plan), they were not required to conduct the focus groups, telephone interviews or personal interviews for their grade. Yet several members of the class sacrificed vacation time and met after the end of the semester to complete this project. There was a high degree of voluntary behavior because they could see the benefit of "real life" experiences. For the majority of students, they anticipated being involved in evaluation activities in their place of employment and viewed the class more as a laboratory where they could practice and hone their evaluation skills. In this respect, I believe the class project met Principle #1.

2. **Mutual Respect**

This principle refers to the need individuals have to feel "valued as separate, unique individuals deserving of respect" (p. 13). Brookfield adds, "Successful educational experiences are generally characterized by the evolution of some form of group consensus regarding acceptable behaviors by participants" (p. 13). This responsibility is both the learners' and the instructor's. It is up to the instructor to provide a climate in which people can feel free to challenge ideas and at the same time, take risks.

Though not planned initially, but implemented because of the client's request, the confidentiality charter was the first step in bringing about this atmosphere of mutual respect. When I first mentioned this request to the students, their reaction was not particularly positive. Some saw it as silly and others were resentful because they interpreted it as not being trusted by the client. After much discussion, however, the group came together and agreed to develop a charter that was simple and straightforward. It took them approximately 5 minutes to develop this once they had aired their thoughts and understood the issues involved. The respect they developed was not only for the client and their needs, but for the individuals in the class as well.

As much as possible I tried to support this climate of respect. This meant allowing and even encouraging the group to challenge one another and me about anything that happened during the project's implementation. The fact that the students remained so involved, and raised so many relevant, difficult and meaningful questions, and strongly recommended this approach be continued in future classes, suggests that this principle was achieved.

3. **Collaborative Spirit.**

One of the differences between school education and adult education, according to Brookfield, is the existence of some kind of participatory and collaborative element in the educational process for adults. This collaborative approach to learning means that the learners share in the responsibility for "posing questions, identifying materials, suggesting priorities, and organizing aspects of the group process" (p. 14).

I believe this principle was achieved at various stages throughout the evaluation project. In the beginning, students developed and refined the key evaluation questions. They made decisions about the appropriate data collection strategies. They participated in work groups to develop and critique the data collection instruments. In addition, they worked together in analyzing and interpreting the open-ended and focus group data. This project depended upon their experiences, new learnings, and willingness to participate and be collaborative.

4. **Action and Reflection.**

According to Brookfield, "This process, centers on the need for educational activity to engage the learner in a continuous and alternating process of investigation and exploration, followed by action grounded in this exploration, followed by reflection on this action, followed by further investigation and exploration... and so on" (p. 15). The way to do this Brookfield suggests, is through providing people with skills and having them apply them in "real life settings".

Clearly this principle was achieved through the reported project. At each phase of the evaluation, or syllabi topic, the class discussed what their experiences had been, what they thought would happen, what did happen, and what it meant for future practice. They continually reflected on the various topics and eventually began constructing new ways of seeing the issues presented to us. Through this reflective practice based on action, the students grew to understand evaluation as a field of study and practice.

5. **Critical Reflection.**

Brookfield takes the concept of reflective practice an additional step farther. He notes the difference between education and training where training is the transmittal of a set of identified skills. However, "in education...learners are encouraged to examine the

assumptions underlying the acquisition of skills, to consider alternative purposes, and to place skill acquisition in some broader context" (p. 17). The key point here, according to Brookfield, is that "education is centrally concerned with the development of a critically aware frame of mind, not with the uncritical assimilation of previously defined skills or bodies of knowledge" (p. 17).

This principle was probably best enacted during discussions about methodology and the epistemology underlying quantitative and quantitative approaches to evaluation. Many of the students had not thought about alternative ways of collecting data nor the assumptions underlying positivism or phenomenology. These discussions were lively and generated several new insights for the students. The inclusion of this principle helps students understand the need for understanding practice through learning the theoretical foundations of disciplined inquiry.

6. **Self-Direction.**

Brookfield defines self-directed learning as, "The adult's assumption of control over setting educational goals and generating personally meaningful evaluative criteria." He adds that self-directed learning is, "A matter of learning how to change our perspectives, shift our paradigms, and replace one way of interpreting the world with another" (p. 19).

I think this principle is the most difficult to obtain. The students were not quite as independent as Brookfield and other theorists on adult learning might have wished. Instead of developing individual learning contracts that are often suggested as a way of encouraging self-directed learning, students were more or less guided by my conception of what needed to be accomplished in the evaluation study. At the same time, they did learn new ways of thinking about evaluation and its practice. The project being acted out in "real life" did challenge the students' to think in new paradigms. This, of course, was achieved to varying degrees with the students.

Post Hoc Observations about Experiential Evaluation Projects

Aside from the traditional end-of-course evaluation required by my department and college, I asked the students to respond to a four question survey that focused only on the evaluation project. Without exception, students recommended using this approach again.

I have learned several things, however, that I will do differently next time. For one, the scope of the project was much too large. It seemed

to grow out of proportion the longer we were engaged in it. Next time, I will make sure that we not take on more than the students can reasonably accomplish in one semester. As Morris (1987) suggests, small scale evaluations have a much greater chance of being completed within a semester framework. He believes that Master's level students, "gain more fully carrying out an evaluation of limited scope than from being involved in a subset of the phases associated with more ambitious projects" (p. 10).

When students were asked how they would improve the process of teaching this course, several suggested that ways to allow students greater participation in the data analysis and report writing be developed. Not only is this beneficial for the student, but it relieves the instructor of a great responsibility.

In the beginning of this paper I spoke about the conflict I've had in finding the right balance between theory and practice for teaching evaluation. In teaching this class using an experiential method, I found it extremely difficult to find the time to address theoretical issues as deeply as I would have liked. While we did not neglect theoretical issues entirely, two students mentioned on their evaluation forms, that they felt they might have missed some theory because of the amount of time we spent "practicing" evaluation skills. Yet, these same students recommended using this approach the next time the course is taught. While I have not resolved the theory vs. practice conflict, I do feel that the experiential nature of this course, based on adult learning principles, provided the learners with a body of knowledge and a set of skills that will greatly benefit them in both their professional and personal lives.

References

Brookfield, S. D. (1987). Understanding and facilitating adult learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brown, R.D. (1985). Supervising evaluation practicum and intern students: A developmental model. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, (7), 2, 161-167.

Cross, K. P. (1984). Adults as learners: Increasing participation and facilitating learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Jarvis, P. (1987). Adult learning in the social context. London: Croom Helm.

Knowles, M. (1979). Andragogy revisited part II. Adult Education, 30 (1), 52-53.

Knowles, M. (1980). The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy. Second edition. Chicago: Follett.

Knowles, M. (1984). Andragogy in action: Applying modern principles of adult learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Knowles, M. (1984). The adult learner: A neglected species. (3rd ed.). Houston: Gulf Publishing Co.

Lindeman, E.C. (1926). The meaning of adult education. New York: New Republic.

McLagan, P.A. (1978). Helping others learn: Designing programs for adults. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Morris, M. (1987). Field experiences in evaluation courses: increasing their value to students and sponsors. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association, Boston.

Morris, M. (1989). Field experiences in evaluation courses. In D, Mertens (Ed.), Creative ideas for teaching evaluation (pp.75-78). Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Moxley, D. P. & Visingardi, R. J. (1989). Teaching evaluation through the practicum experience. Evaluation Practice, 10 (2), (pp. 54-58).

Patton, M. Q. (1982). Practical evaluation. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Schon, D. A. (1983). The reflective practitioner. New York: Basic Books.

Weeks, E.C. (1982). The value of experimental approaches to evaluation training. Evaluation and Program Planning, (5), 1, 21-30.

Wlodkowski, R. J. (1986). Enhancing adult motivation to learn. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Zemke, R. & Zemke, S. (1988). 30 Things we know for sure about adult learning. Training, 25 (7), 57-61.

Revised 3/7/99

APPENDIX A
EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX

DATA SOURCES

KEY QUESTION	CUSTOMER	NON-POLICY CLAIMANTS	R.M. & D.M.	EMPLOYEES	DOCUMENTS	FORMER CUSTOMERS	MSI MANAGE-MENT
1. What organizational factors affect employees' ability to provide high quality customer service?	Survey	Phone Int.	Phone int.	Focus Group Survey	X	Phone Int.	Pers. Interview
2. How do verbal and written communication processes affect the quality of customer service?	Survey		Phone int.	Focus Group Survey	X	Phone Int.	Pers. Interview
3. How effective have the training initiatives been in increasing employees' ability to provide quality customer service?			Phone int.	"Call Home" Observation Focus Group Survey	X		Pers. Interview
4. What additional training would likely increase the level of customer service provided by employees?			Phone int.	Focus Group Survey Observation	X		Pers. Interview
5. How do employees perceive the goals of providing customer service?			Phone int.	Focus Group Survey	X		Pers. Interview
6. What do employees perceive to be the obstacles in providing quality customer service?			Phone int.	Focus Group Survey	X		Pers. Interview
7. How consistent is the service being provided by employees and agents?	Survey		Phone int.	Focus Group Survey	X	Phone Int.	Pers. Interview
8. How satisfied are customers with the level of customer service provided by?	Survey	Phone Int.	Phone int.	Focus Group Survey	X	Phone Int.	Pers. Interview
9. What recommendations do customers and employees have for improving the level of quality service provided by?	Survey	Phone Ine.	Phone int.	Focus Group Survey	X	Phone Int.	Pers. Interview